The Atabegs and Ayyubids | War and Horsemanship

‘Most of the prized military horses came from Central Asia, brought by fierce Turkish warriors.’

Horses were essential for travel during this period, and were also indispensable on the battlefield. Most of the prized military horses came from Central Asia, brought by fierce Turkish warriors whose expertise as horse-riders was crucial to the success of Nur al-Din and Saladin’s armies. A renowned tactic of the Turks was to charge towards the enemy turning around at the last moment, and shooting an arrow as they sped away. Combined with their speed and equestrian agility, this tactic gave them a huge advantage against the Franks during the Crusades.



Name:
Equestrian figurine

Dynasty:
Hegira 6th century / AD 12th century Ayyubid

Details:
National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
A ceramic equestrian Turcoman wearing a long plait. He is wielding a sword and is about to strike a dragon which is wound around the leg of his horse.



Name:
Citadel of Aleppo

Dynasty:
Hegira 6th–7th century / AD 12th–13th century Zangid, Ayyubid and Mamluk

Details:
Aleppo, Syria

Justification:
Urban citadels, such as those in Damascus and Aleppo, contained more palatial buildings and decorative motifs than those found outside the city.



Name:
Damascus Citadel

Dynasty:
Hegira 599–610 / AD 1202–14 Ayyubid

Details:
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
Urban citadels, such as those in Damascus and Aleppo, contained more palatial buildings and decorative motifs than those found outside the city

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Name:
Qal'at Ja'bar

Dynasty:
Hegira first half of the 5th–mid 7th century / AD first half of the 11th– mid-13th century Seljuq, Zangid, Ayyubid

Details:
Raqqa region, Syria

Justification:
Originally built by a local Arab tribe, Qal'at Ja'bar was rebuilt by Nur al-Din Mahmud bin Zangi in 563 / 1168 due to its strategic location on the Eastern route.